DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 564 CG 022 062

AUTHOR Agee, Emily M.
TITLE A Portrait of Older Minorities.
INSTITUTION American Association of Retired Persons, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 17p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Association of Retired Persons, 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Blacks; Educational Attainment; Employment; Health; *Hispanic Americans; Housing; *Older Adults; Population Trends; Profiles; Racial Differences; Sex Differences; *Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

This booklet presents facts and statistics describing minority elderly persons in the United States. First general information is presented about minority elderly as a whole, noting that minority groups have increased risks of poor education, substandard housing, poverty, malnutrition, and generally poor health. Next, facts are presented about Black elderly, including the number of Black elderly, ratios of men to women, growth rates, regional concentrations, marital stuatus, living arrangements, educational level, employment, income, poverty status, and health. Similar types of statistics are presented for Hispanic elderly, Asian/Pacific Island elderly, and Native American elderly. The booklet concludes that: (1) the status of minority elderly is not likely to improve greatly in the immediate future; (2) for younger minorities the outlook is somewhat better due to increased opportunities for education and employment which result in higher incomes and larger benefits; and (3) efforts to enhance the status of minorities increase the likelihood of better living conditions, employment opportunities, and health for minority elderly. Seven figures supplement the text. (AB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED312564

The AARP Minority Affairs Initiative

A Portrait of Older Minorities

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG 022062

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

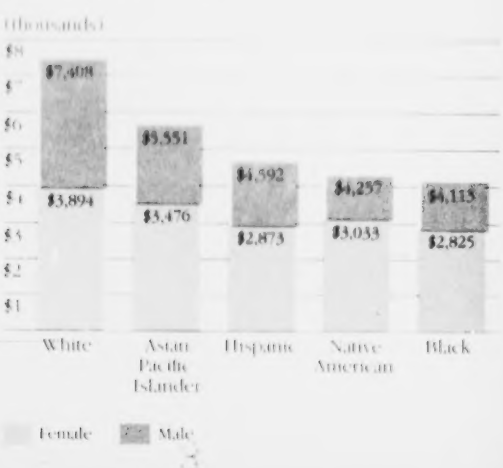
Heidi J. Council

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

AARP

- The AARP Minority Affairs Initiative aims to improve the economic, social and physical well being of the nation's older minorities by addressing issues that directly affect their quality of life. In particular it seeks improved living conditions, better job opportunities, greater participation in public private programs and agencies, and increased awareness of the status of minority elderly and of their many contributions to our nation.
- Together, minority and non minority elderly can enrich each other's lives and achieve the goal of a secure, fulfilling life for all older Americans.

FIGURE 1 Median Income For All Races, 65+ - 1980*



Minority Elderly

- Although age is sometimes called the great equalizer, today's elderly are a highly diverse group. Differences in income, health and social supports significantly affect the elderly's quality of life. An important source of this diversity is ethnicity.
- The status and resources of many minority elderly reflect social and economic discrimination experienced earlier in life. Many, especially those who migrated to the U.S., face cultural and language differences as well.
- Consequently, minority groups in the U.S. have increased risks of poor education, substandard housing, poverty, malnutrition, and generally poor health.
- In recent years, the elderly population has been growing faster among minorities than among whites, and we can expect this trend to continue. In 1980, over 2.5 million persons, or 10%, of the population 65 and over were nonwhite.* By 2025, 15% of the elderly population are projected to be nonwhite, and by 2050, 20% are likely to be nonwhite.
- Still, white elderly outnumber minority elderly. Approximately 11% of the total white population in 1980 was age 65 or over, while 8% of the Black population, 6% of Asian-Pacific Islanders, 5% of Hispanics, and 5% of Native Americans, were 65 or older.
- Health care assistance is a special concern of minority elderly. Cultural and language differences, along with physical isolation and lower income, often make using health care services difficult.
- Contrary to popular belief, the elderly, both white and nonwhite, are not typically abandoned by their families. Admission to a nursing home is usually a last resort. Most minority elderly remain in the community and are cared for by family, friends, and relatives. But as the number of frail elderly continues to grow, so does the burden placed on those who care for them.

Black Elderly

- About 2.1 million (8%) of the Black population in the U.S. were age 65 or over as of 1980. Of that group, about 157,500 (7.5%) were age 85 or over.
- Among Blacks aged 60-64, there are 80 men for every 100 women, while for whites there are 87 men for every 100 women. At age 70-74, the sex ratio is much closer, but drops much faster and further among whites at the oldest ages, (85+). (Figure 1)
- Still, Black elderly form the fastest growing segment of the Black population. Between 1970 and 1980, the Black elderly population increased 34% but the total Black population increased only 16%.
- Approximately one-fifth of Black elderly live in rural areas — a somewhat lower proportion than white elderly (about one-fourth) — and over 59% are concentrated in the Southeastern states. Of the remainder, most live either in the North Central or Northeast regions. (Figure 2)

Marital Status

- Among both whites and Blacks age 65 or older, the majority of men are married, the majority of women are widowed. (Figure 3)

FIGURE 2 States with Concentrations of Black Elderly 65+ — 1980*

- However, among older males, more than twice as many Blacks as whites are divorced or separated, and the proportion of widowed is also higher. The marital status of older Black and white women is generally the same, except that the percentage of older Black women divorced or separated is slightly higher. (Figure 3)

Living Arrangements

- While about 94% of all elderly live in the community, a slightly higher proportion (96%) of Black elderly do.
- Since relatively more older Blacks than whites are widowed, divorced, or separated, a smaller proportion live with their spouses. However, sharing a home with a grown child, usually a daughter, is a common living arrangement for older Blacks.
- Only 3% of all Black elderly are institutionalized, whereas about 5% of white elderly are. This trend is more apparent among the oldest old (85 and over) who generally are more likely to be widowed and in need of physical and medical assistance. Among the eldest population, only 12% of Blacks live in nursing homes, while 25% of whites do.

Education

- Unlike many immigrant minorities, the Black elderly were educated within U.S. school systems when access to educational resources was severely limited. Affirmative action and minority scholarship programs instituted in the last 20 years have not benefitted today's Black elderly.
- Yet only 6% of Black elderly have had no formal education. However, among whites the proportion is lower (2%). Those Black elderly with formal schooling show a marked difference in educational achievement, for example, only 17% completed high school as compared to 41% among white elderly.

Employment

- About the same percentage (13%) of Blacks and whites continue to work after age 65. But among men, Blacks have lower levels of lifetime labor force participation than whites.

- They also are more likely to have experienced periods of unemployment, due to discrimination and other causes. Not only do Black men accumulate less work experience, they also are more likely to leave the work force earlier.

Income

- Blacks as well as other minority elderly typically are less likely to work in professions or jobs with high benefits. Also, less education, fewer skilled jobs, lower salaries, and long periods of unemployment mean Blacks are less likely to accumulate income, other assets, and/or benefits and pensions. Consequently, Black elderly on average have less personal post-retirement income and are thus more dependent on Social Security benefits for the majority of their retirement than are their white counterparts. The median income of Black elderly is quite less that that of white elderly: About $4,113 for Black men, $2,825 for women, compared to $7,408 for white men, and $3,894 for women. (Figure 4)

Poverty Status

- In urban areas, 32% of Black Elderly live in poverty (1 in 3), while 11% of older whites are in poverty (1 in 9). In rural areas nearly 1 out of 2 Black elderly live in poverty.***
- In the rural areas, almost 40% of white women over 75 are poor but over two thirds (68%) of rural Black women are in or near poverty.

Health

- Black elderly are more likely to be sick and disabled, and to see themselves as being in poor health than white elderly. They have higher rates of chronic disease, functional impairment, and indicators of risk, such as high blood pressure. At age 65-75, mortality of Blacks is higher than that of whites. Blacks of extreme old age (75+) have lower mortality rates but higher rates of poverty and illness.

Hispanic Elderly

- The Hispanic populations share a common language, but come from diverse cultures. As defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Hispanic community consists of persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish Hispanic origin.
- Nearly 673,000 (about 5%) of the Hispanic population are 65 years of age or over, and of those almost 45,000 (6.6%) are 85 or older.
- Among Hispanics aged 60–64, there are 86 men for every 100 women. The sex ratio declines with age to 61:100 at age 85. (Figure 1)
- The proportion of Hispanic elderly (11%) living in rural areas is less than half that of rural white elderly (26%).
- The vast majority of Hispanic elderly live in four states, each with different concentrations of Hispanic groups. While the majority of the Hispanic population in California and Texas are from Mexico and Central America, Florida attracts the Cuban population, and New York receives a large number of immigrants from Puerto Rico and the Caribbean Islands. (Figure 2)

Marital Status

- Nearly twice as many Hispanic men as women age 65 and older are married and living with their spouses — a pattern mirrored in the white elderly population.

FIGURE 2 States with Concentrations of Hispanic Elderly 65+ — 1980*

- Almost twice as many older Hispanic men and women are divorced or separated as whites, but the same proportion of women Hispanic and white are widowed. (Figure 3)

Living Arrangements

- About 97% of the Hispanic elderly live in households in the community, either alone, with family members, or with non relatives.
- The remainder mostly live in nursing homes. However, among elderly 85 or older, only 10% of Hispanics are in nursing homes, as compared to 23% of whites.
- 72% of Hispanic elderly live with at least one family member, a slightly higher percentage than white elderly (69%).

Education

- Of all minority elderly, those of Hispanic background are the least educated. The proportion with no formal schooling is eight times as great as for whites. Of Hispanics 65 and older, 16% have had no education and only 19% graduated from high school.

Employment

- The percentage of Hispanic elderly in the labor force is the same as that in the white population (13%). The percentage of unemployed workers is nearly twice as great among elderly Hispanics (9%) as among whites (5%).

FIGURE 1 Sex Ratio for all Races 65+: 1980*

RACE Men Per 100 Women	AGE 60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+
White	87	81	72	61	52	45
Black	80	73	69	63	60	50
Hispanic	80	76	72	70	73	61
Asian Pacific Islander	84	93	109	89	67	60
Native American	87	77	82	74	66	59

Income

- The median personal income of Hispanic men aged 65 years or more is $4,592, or 62% that of white males the same age. Elderly Hispanic women have a median income of $2,873, while white elderly women have a median income of $3,894. (Figure 4)

Poverty Status

- The percentage of Hispanic elderly with incomes below the poverty level** is twice as large (26%) as among elderly whites (13%). Poverty rates are higher in rural than in urban areas, and higher among women than men.
- Thus rural women are the most impoverished group of all. For example, among the Hispanic elderly, 38% of rural women have a below poverty income, as compared to 21% of white rural women.

Health

- Of all groups 65 and over living in the community (not in nursing homes), 85% reported at least one chronic ailment, 45% report some limitation in performing day-to-day activities. Hispanic elderly have somewhat higher rates of activity limitation (48%) and have more days per year in bed because of illness.

FIGURE 5 Marital Status of Persons 65+, 1980*

RACE / SEX	Married	Widowed	Divorced/ Separated	Single (Never Married)
White				
Men	74.2%	13.9%	6.6%	5.4%
Women	36.1%	51.1%	6.0%	6.8%
Black				
Men	56.9%	22.1%	14.7%	6.3%
Women	25.0%	52.7%	11.6%	9.6%
Hispanic				
Men	65.6%	16.6%	12.8%	6.3%
Women	30.8%	49.9%	12.3%	7.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander				
Men	65.4%	12.9%	14.2%	7.5%
Women	30.2%	55.6%	10.1%	4.1%
Native American				
Men	59.7%	20.6%	13.6%	6.1%
Women	31.9%	55.1%	10.3%	3.6%

Source: Agree, 1985.
* Total may exceed 100% due to percentage rounding.

Future Outlook

- The status of minority elderly is not likely to improve greatly in the immediate future. The factors which largely determine the elderly's quality of life — education, employment, income, and health — will not vary much among the minority population now approaching retirement age.
- For those minorities presently younger, the outlook is somewhat better. Increased opportunities for education and employment resulting in proportionately higher incomes and larger benefits and/or pensions, along with improved health care, means that the next generation of minority elderly may enjoy a higher quality of life than their predecessors.
- Efforts to enhance the status of minorities and elderly, like the AARP Minority Affairs Initiative, increase the likelihood of better living conditions, employment opportunities, and health for minority elderly. More can and should be done now to encourage the use of available programs and services, both public and private.

A Portrait of Older Minorities is offered by the AARP Minority Affairs Initiative in cooperation with the Program Resources Department, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

Project Manager:

Marie Phillips, Director
AARP Minority Affairs

Information researched and compiled by:

Emily M. Agree
Center for Population Research
Georgetown University

The American Association of Retired Persons is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. The largest organization of older Americans in the nation, with over 24 million members, AARP's services include legislative representation, educational and community service programs, and direct membership benefits.

For a single free copy of this brochure, write:

A Portrait of Older Minorities
AARP Fulfillment
P.O. Box 2400
Long Beach, CA 90801

For multiple free copies write:

A Portrait of Older Minorities
AARP Fulfillment
1909 K Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20049

MA 3668 (287) • D12404

Asian/Pacific Islander Elderly

- Asian/Pacific Islanders in the U.S. include a number of distinct cultural groups. Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Vietnamese, and others.
- Although diverse in origin, Asian/Pacific Islanders share an immigrant history and similar treatment under U.S. law. The Asian/Pacific Islander elderly consist mainly of three groups: migrants who arrived during the turn of the century; children born to these immigrants; and elderly migrants, primarily from Southeast Asia who entered the U.S. in the 1970s with their families.
- Between 1965 and 1975 alone, there was a four fold increase in the number of Asian/Pacific Islander elderly. About 221,500 (6%) of the Asian/Pacific Islander population are age 65 or over. Of those, about 15,000 (6.7%) are age 85 or over.
- Unlike the white and other ethnic minority populations, there are more elderly Asian/Pacific Islander men than women. Among those aged 60-64, there are 84 men for every 100 women. The sex ratio actually increases in the 70-74 year old age group, then declines at age 85 and over. (Figure 1)

FIGURE 2 **States with Concentrations of Asian/Pacific Islander Elderly 65+ : 1980***

- The 1980 census shows that approximately 10% of Asian/Pacific Islander elderly live in rural areas, over 55% are concentrated in California, Hawaii, and the state of Washington. Of the remainder, most live either in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, or in Illinois and Texas. (Figure 2)

Marital Status

- As in the white population, the majority of Asian/Pacific Islander men aged 65 and over are married, while the majority of women are widowed. (Figure 3)
- Asian/Pacific Islander women are much more likely to be married than their white counterparts, with a smaller proportion remaining single in their later years. (Figure 3)

Living Arrangements

- Of all Asian/Pacific Islander elderly, 96% live outside of institutions, in the community, and only 19% live alone; whereas 94% of white elderly live in the community, and 30% live by themselves.
- The proportion of Asian/Pacific Islander elderly living in nursing homes (2%) is also lower than that of whites (5%). This difference is even more pronounced among the oldest old (85+), with 10% Asian/Pacific Islanders in nursing homes, as compared to 23% whites.

Education

- Recent Asian/Pacific Islander migrants include a large number of well educated professionals. Even so, more Asian/Pacific Islander elderly lack formal education than whites (13% versus 1.6%).
- Of all minority elderly, Asian/Pacific Islanders have the greatest proportion of high school graduates (26%), yet this is still less than white elderly (41%).

Employment

- Asian/Pacific Islanders are more likely to continue working after age 65 than whites. Even at age 75 and over, approximately 16% of all Asian/Pacific Islanders work.

- These figures may relate to the high number of self employed Asian Pacific Islanders (about 25%), many as farmers or in small businesses.
- 8% of Asian Pacific Islanders are unemployed, as opposed to 5% of white elderly.

Income

- Median income for elderly Asian Pacific Islander men (65 years or over) is less than that of white men in the same age group: $5,551 versus $7,408. The comparable figures for women are $3,476 for Asian Pacific Islanders, and $3,894 for whites. (Figure 4)

Poverty Status

- The proportion of Asian Pacific Islander elderly living below poverty level closely compares to that of the white elderly population. Overall, 14% of Asian Pacific Islander elderly and 13% of white elderly live below the poverty level.**
- In rural areas, slightly fewer Asian Pacific Islander elderly live at or near poverty level than whites (26% versus 27%).***
- Of rural women 75 years and over, 37% Asian Pacific Islander and 40% white are in or near poverty.***

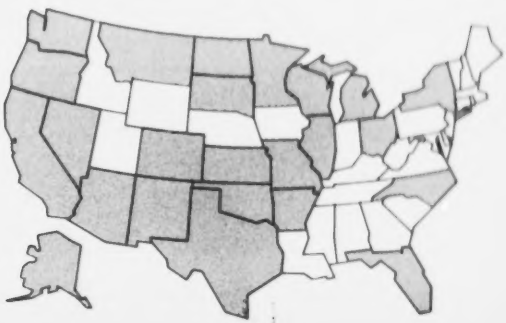
Health

- Certain types of cancers, hypertension, and tuberculosis are major health concerns of Asian Pacific Islander elderly.
- Relatively little data exists on the use of health services by Asian Pacific Islander elderly, but a few studies have documented some significant factors. Asian Pacific Islander elderly are less likely to use formal health care services, such as those reimbursed under Medicare. Cultural and language differences, a reliance on folk medicine, and a distrust of Western medicine help explain why.

Native American Elderly

- The Native American population includes Indians, Eskimo, and Aleut.
- Because the Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and not the individual States, are the final arbitrators of questions regarding the needs of Native Americans, older Native Americans have less access to government assistance, which increases their risks of substandard housing, poverty, malnutrition, and poor health.
- The proportion of elderly among the Native American population has grown faster than in other minority groups. Between 1970 and 1980, their numbers increased by 65%, a rate twice that of the white or Black elderly.
- About 79,500 (5%) of the Native American population are over age 65. Of these, about 6,100 (7.7%) are aged 85 or over.
- Among Native Americans ages 60–64, there are 87 men for every 100 women. The sex ratio declines with age to 59:100 at age 85 or over. (Figure 1)
- About one quarter of Native American elderly live on American Indian reservations or in Alaskan Native villages. Over half are concentrated in Southwestern states of Oklahoma, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Of the remainder, most live in states along the Canadian border. (Figure 2)

FIGURE 2 **States with Concentrations of Native American Elderly 65+ : 1980***



- A far greater proportion (52%) of Native American elderly live in rural areas than any other subgroup of the population. Only about 10% of Asian Pacific Islander or Hispanic elderly, and [illegible] 20% of Black and 26% of white elderly live in rural areas.

Marital Status

- The marital status of Native Americans is comparable to that of the white population. Of Native Americans and whites age 65 and over, the majority of men are married and the majority of women are widowed. (Figure 3)
- Like Asian Pacific Islander women, Native American elderly women are more likely to be married in their later years than are white women. (Figure 3)

Living Arrangements

- About 96% of Native American elderly live in households in the community, the remainder live in institutions. About the same percentage of Native American elderly as white elderly are living with family members (66% versus 65%). For both groups, more men than women live with family members.
- As with other minority groups, the proportion of Native American elderly in nursing homes is low. This trend is most apparent among the oldest old (85+), with 13% of Native Americans compared to 23% of whites living in nursing homes.

Education

- Native American elderly have been educated almost exclusively within the U.S. school systems. The quality of that education, both on and off reservations, often has been poor.
- Nearly 12% of all Native American elderly have no formal education; about 22% have graduated from high school.

Employment

- About the same number of Native Americans and whites continue to work after age 65 (12% and 13%, respectively). Nearly twice as many Native American elderly as older whites, however, are unemployed and actively seeking work (9% versus 5%).

Income

- The median income for Native American men aged 65 or over is $4,257, as compared to $7,408 for comparable white males. For women in this age group, the median income is $3,033 for Native Americans, and $3,894 for whites. (Figure 4)

Poverty Status

- Overall, 32% of Native Americans (versus 13% of whites) 65 years or older live below the official poverty level.**
- In urban areas, 25% of Native American elderly are in poverty; in rural areas, the proportion is even higher — 39% in 1980.

Health

- Indian Health Service figures for 1980 show average life expectancy at birth for Native Americans to be only 65 years, eight years less than that of whites.
- The major health problems of elderly Native Americans are tuberculosis, diabetes, liver and kidney disease, high blood pressure, pneumonia, and malnutrition.
- The majority of Native American elderly rarely see a physician, primarily because the elderly needing medical assistance often live in isolated areas and lack transportation. Other reasons relate to a long-standing reliance on ritual folk healing and a different cultural understanding of disease — factors often neglected or overlooked by health care professionals and planners.

Footnotes

* Unless otherwise specified, all statistics are based on the 1980 Census of Population, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

** Discussions of poverty rates are based on the 1980 poverty level, defined as $4,954 for an elderly couple (65+), and $3,941 for an elderly individual. In 1984, the poverty level was defined as $6,282 for an elderly couple (65+), and $4,979 for an individual 65 years or older.

*** within 125% of poverty threshold